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ABSTRACT

Abolitionist-feminist Angelina Grimke's "Pennsylvania Hall" address in 1838 is more than an important early feminist document. Through the use of rhetorical techniques (such as those known to contemporary feminists as elements of "consciousness raising"), Grimke empowers herself and her women listeners through the act of speaking. Most important, her speech transforms then-current definitions of woman's proper role through the related and mutually enforcing concepts of "enactment" and "iconicity," thus continuing to provide a model of rhetorical empowerment for the oppressed. What emerges is a model of empowerment not only for Grimke's contemporaries, but for her rhetorical heirs as well. (Thirty-one notes are included, and excerpts from the Grimke address are attached.) (Author/SG)

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ICONICITY AS EMPOWERMENT: ANGELINA GRIMKE AT PENNSYLVANIA HALL

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ICONICITY AS EMPOWERMENT: ANGELINA GRIMKE AT PENNSYLVANIA HALL

Abolitionist-feminist Angelina Grimke's "Pennsylvania Hall" address in 1838 is more than an important early feminist document. Through the use of rhetorical techniques (such as those known to contemporary feminists as elements of "consciousness raising"), Grimke empowers herself and her women listeners through the act of speaking. Most importantly, her speech transforms then-current definitions of woman's proper role through the related and mutually-reinforcing concepts of enactment and iconicity, thus continuing to provide a model of rhetorical empowerment for the oppressed.

Whoever heard of a Philadelphia lady setting up for a reformer, or standing out for women's rights, or assisting to man the election grounds, raise a regiment, command a legion, or address a jury? Our ladies glow with a higher ambition....Is not everything managed by female influence?....

A woman is nobody. A wife is everything. A pretty girl is equal to 10,000 men, and a mother is next to God, all powerful.....The ladies of Philadelphia, therefore, have...resolved to maintain their rights as Wives, Belles, Virgins, and Mothers, and not as Women. (--Public Ledger and Daily Transcript)[1]

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My readers may smile when I confess to them that at first I was myself not a little disturbed in my sense of propriety. But...[t]he experience of that week dispelled my Pauline prejudice....I could not believe that God gave [the Grimke sisters] such talents as they evinced to be buried in a napkin. (--Abolitionist Samuel J. May)[2]

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Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes the rhetoric of the women's liberation movement as "anti-rhetorical" because it rejects "certain traditional concepts of the rhetorical process--as persuasion of the many by an expert or leader, as adjustment or adaptation to audience norms, and as directed toward inducing acceptance of a specific program or a commitment to group action."[3] Instead, she says, the women involved in the movement use a mode of interaction called "consciousness raising," which aims to develop a community of women, autonomous and supportive of each other, who can view their own personal experiences as political.[4] Making the personal political, as I will be using it here, means that one's individual experiences are viewed as standing for and illustrating the (usually inequitable) political, social, and economic relationships that characterize society as a whole. While "consciousness raising" and "making the personal political" are contemporary phrases, they describe rhetorical strategies traceable to some of the earliest abolitionist feminists in their fight against slavery.

One of those activists was Angelina Grimke, who, along with her sister Sarah, rebelled against the slave system of their native South Carolina and travelled North in the 1830's.[5] There the sisters provided powerful anti-slavery testimony, speaking and writing about the horrors of slavery from their own experience. Angelina Grimke, addressing the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women at Pennsylvania Hall, Philadelphia in May of 1838, in one of the earliest recorded speeches given by an American woman to a mixed audience,[6] displays many of the "anti-rhetorical" and 'consciousness raising' tendencies Campbell describes.

While the Grimkes and other women who dared to speak faced a variety of negative reactions, ranging from mere social disapproval (what fellow abolitionist May describes as his own "Pauline prejudice,") to disgust and even harassment,[7] Angelina Grimke's Pennsylvania Hall address is one of the more dramatic examples. Her speech, frequently interrupted by an angry mob which had gathered outside the hall, demonstrates courage and composure in the face of threatened physical violence.[8]

In this essay I seek to deepen and extend our understanding of this address in particular, and the rhetorical options available to oppressed peoples in general. This paper is informed by Japp's reading of the speech, in which she notes Grimke's frequent use of Biblical language and her adoption of a prophetic persona.[9] However, I will argue that through the use of religious language, personal narrative, and redefinition through transformatic, Grimke enacts rhetorical power in speaking, encouraging other women by her example. Additionally, Grimke's Pennsylvania Hall address provides an unusually fine model of gaining power through enactment because it works on many levels at once: not only does Grimke as a woman speaking convey the message that women are capable of power and do possess certain rights, but this message is re-enacted at the micro-level, as the structure of Grimke's sentences reinforces their meaning.

SPEAKING AS A WOMAN

In one sense, not much had changed between the time of Grimke's speech in 1838 and Campbell's 1973 assessment of feminist rhetoric. In both cases, and to some extent today as well, the very fact of a woman speaking in public puts a remarkable constraint on speaker and audience. A speaker is traditionally, as Campbell notes, an authority figure: a leader, an expert. Traditionally, these roles belong to men. A woman assuming such a role is, by definition, radical, no matter what she has to say.[10]

What Angelina Grimke had to say, however, was as radical as the fact that she was a woman speaking in public. She was speaking about abolition, which was controversial enough to cause a stir when men spoke about it. What made her speech triply sensational was that she also spoke about the rights and duties of women in the fight against slavery. There was no possible hope, then, that by speaking she could achieve or even approach the traditional objects of rhetoric: to dispel prejudice, adapt her message to her audience, and unite all her listeners to her cause. Instead, by the act of speaking to the group in the face of mob violence, Grimke performs a new role for women. She enacts her advice to the audience and serves as an inspirational example to the sympathetic few, in particular, to other women.

ENACTING POWER THROUGH SPEAKING

Grimke's Pennsylvania Hall address serves as a prime example, or paradigm, of the rhetorical potential of enacting the behavior and values that one is recommending to the audience. In this case, by speaking as a woman on a question of public policy, Grimke assumes the power and the rights that she sought (and that many women are still seeking, 150 years later).[11] Such enactment is a particularly vital technique for members of oppressed groups, who begin with little or no power. By demonstrating positive qualities such as strength, compassion, intelligence, coherence of reasoning, and courage, such speakers can empower themselves, and listeners who identify with them, as they speak.[12]

But the enactment in Grimke's speech is multi-layered. Not only does she enact the role of a woman speaking in public, encouraging others to speak out, but her linguistic style reinforces the vision of her as a powerful force, re-enacting power at the micro-level: at the level of the word, the syllable, the sound. Such a process can best be understood by borrowing terminology from the linguistic analysis of literature: Leech and Short have described the representational function of literature as a principle of "iconicity," the way in which the sense of the sentence is echoed or imitated by the sound and/or structure of the sentence.[13]

I am not arguing that Grimke herself understood the concepts of enactment and iconicity, consciously setting out to build her speech around them. Nor did she have access to contemporary theories of "consciousness raising," "redefinition through transformation," and the use of the "personal narrative." However, these techniques do enable a relatively powerless speaker to gain power through speaking, and the careful listener or critic can see them operating in Grimke's speech, especially at pivotal moments.

Grimke was using the rhetorical strategies closest to hand. Although the prevalent attitude of the day held that "a woman is nothing," even the Public Ledger and Daily Transcript asked, "Is not everything managed by female influence?"[14] Especially in the moral, religious sphere, women were granted some measure of influence, if not leadership. (Grimke's conversion to the Quaker

faith is significant, for Quakers allowed women to speak in church–while a century and a half later, other denominations resist allowing women to serve as ministers or priests.) Grimke's familiarity with Biblical scripture allows her to borrow both language and role.[15]

In addition to religious language and prophetic tone, however, Grimke uses her own experience as license to speak, in effect "bearing witness" and "testifying" (which have religious as well as legal connotations), telling of her own "conversion" from slaveholder to abolitionist. First-hand experience makes her an expert and allows her to say to her listeners, in essence, "I, who was born into a slaveholding family, have seen the light. You can too." While personal narratives have obviously been widely used in religious contexts, they are perhaps the "ultimately available" form of discourse. Even the most oppressed person has access to his or her own experience. Telling one's own story allows one to begin the process of self-definition (or redefinition) that is crucial to empowerment, which explains the prevalence of personal narrative in consciousness raising.[16] By speaking of her past, she renders that experience public, and both the content and act of her speech infuse her experience with political significance. Grimke uses the spiritual and the emotional (both traditionally part of the female domain), publicly encouraging other women to become autonomous and supportive of each other, fulfilling the functions of what later feminists would call consciousness raising. For several reasons, then, this speech is laden with religious language and an emphasis on Grimke's personal experience.

GRIMKE AS PROPHET

Japp writes, "[A]s one chosen of God to present God's message, [Grimke] admonished the uncommitted, exhorted the faithful, and rebuked the opposition."[17] Grimke quotes from the Bible throughout her speech, saying "[T]hey know not what they do";[18] "Oh tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon"(379); and "God has chosen things that are not to bring to nought things that are" (379). And even when not quoting or alluding to specific Biblical verses, Grimke often speaks in sentences that echo Biblical ideas and phrasing, such as "I fled to the land of Penn"

(378); "[C]ast out first the spirit of slavery from your own hearts" (375); "Many times have I wept in the land of my birth..." (377); and "But in the midst of temptation I was preserved...until at last I have exiled myself from my native land" (378).

Grimke's prophetic tone and stance are apparent from the earliest moments of the speech as recorded by Webb. She initially addresses her audience, "Men, brethren and fathers--mothers, daughters and sisters" (375), terms with religious as well as relational connotations, (which I explore further below).

She continues, "[W]hat came ye out for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" (375). Her use of this quotation from the New Testament book of Luke is quite loaded with meaning: these are Jesus' words to a crowd about their reaction to John the Baptist (Luke 7:24). Jesus describes John as a prophet, and much more than a prophet, since he prepares the way for Christ (Luke 7:26) and goes on to say that some who heard John the Baptist believed, and were baptized, while others (Pharisees) rejected him. Implicit in her question to the crowd, then, is the association of Grimke with both John the Baptist and Jesus, prophet and savior, and the warning that rejecting her and her message is tantamount to rejecting the teachings of God. Later, Grimke spells out the individual and collective dangers involved in such rejection: the "undermining" of the crowd's "own rights and their own happiness, temporal and eternal" (375); and the risk of calling down the just wrath of God for harboring "slavery--that curse of nations" (379).

Instead of applauding her audience for their attendance at her speech, she challenges their motives: "Is it curiosity merely, or a deep sympathy with the perishing slave, that has brought this large audience together?" (375). Grimke-as-prophet is true to her ideals and her message, behaving in a manner that Hart and Burks would say typifies a "noble self" rather than someone who is "rhetorically sensitive."[19]

The curiosity motif works in several ways. The fact that Grimke, a woman, is speaking in public about two controversial issues is a rather "freakish" and unusual occurrence. The audience may be curious to see this event, and/or curious to hear about slavery from one who has seen it.

One who is curious is somehow neutral in feeling, detached. Later, Grimke asserts that there is no neutral ground on this moral issue: "He that is not for us is against us" (379). Curiosity, therefore, is not a legitimate motivation. It becomes charged with negative associations indicating a lack of moral sensibility and an ultimate favoring of the evil of slavery. While she projects that those in her audience may ask, "What has the North to do with slavery?" (375)--implying that they have committed no sins toward the slave--Grimke redefines the issue and accuses her listeners, by their very inaction and detachment, of sins of omission toward the slave. Like those who have visited the South and come away with pleasant impressions, those in the North who treat Grimke with hospitality but have no sympathy for the slave commit a more subtle, but equally potent, evil.

REFUSING TO BE SILENCED

A refusal to be silenced in the face of public opposition is one characteristic of the role of prophet. Like a prophet, Grimke pits radical truth, as revealed to her individual conscience ("I have seen [slavery]. I know it has horrors that can never be described" [376]), against the inherently compromised and compromising values of sociability and reliance on public opinion, noting that "A desire to please the world, to keep the favor of all parties and of all conditions, makes [the great men of this country and the church] dumb on this and every other unpopular subject" (376).

Since Grimke, unlike a "traditional" speaker (a male politician, for example), has no public influence but only the power of her convictions, she has no elected office to lose. She has already experienced public criticism. While she does not enjoy it, she does not fear the public censure that kept powerful male politicians and church leaders from speaking in favor of abolition. The wrath of the anti-abolitionist mob is a very real danger, but Grimke enacts her recommendations to her listeners by refusing to be silenced, a refusal that becomes only more adamant in the face of threats of physical violence. As Japp notes, Grimke "boldly seize[s] the opportunity, turning the hostility of the crowd into a rhetorical advantage."[20] Grimke has already proven that she values the health of her soul over bodily comfort by giving up the benefits afforded her by slavery. Now, at a

disruption by the mob early in her speech, she illustrates that she places the moral compunction to bear testimony over her personal safety by saying:

> What is a mob? What would the breaking of every window be? What would the levelling of this Hall be? Any evidence that we are wrong, or that slavery is a good and wholesome institution? What if the mob should now burst in upon us, break up our meeting and commit violence upon our persons–would this be anything compared with what the slaves endure? No, no...(376)

Grimke's dramatic words achieve an enhanced power by virtue of iconicity. The sentences in this segment of the speech grow increasingly longer as they depict increasingly serious threats. All of these happenings (levelling the Hall, personal injury) would be noteworthy, but they would be small compared to the past and present suffering of the slave, and the hideous evil of slavery itself. Violence, she says, only proves her point. She revels in the opposition of the mob because it shows that her speech is perceived as a threat by the South.[21] She turns their reaction against them, implying that it grants her some degree of power. Her moral courage is increasingly evident as she continues to speak, risking the wrath of the mob.

Like Edmund Burke in his address to the electors at Bristol, Grimke refuses to be a weathercock responsive to "the shiftings of every fashionable gale."[22] But unlike Burke, no one has asked Grimke to represent the public interest. She has taken that duty upon herself, qualified by her experience as a woman born to the Southern system of slavery and compelled by her morals and conscience to flee from it. In the language and spirit of a religious revival, she will "bear testimony" to what she personally has seen and experienced (376). Grimke gives voice to feelings that have troubled her, as later American women would do in leaderless consciousness raising groups.

GRIMKE'S PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Early in her speech, Grimke claims her right to speak by referring to her own experience:

> As a Southerner I feel that it is my duty to stand up here tonight and bear testimony against slavery. I have seen it....I was brought up under its wing: I witnessed for many years its demoralizing influences, and its destructiveness to human happiness. (376)

However, she is interrupted by the mob and turns to address the significance of the hostile crowd's presence and actions. Eventually Grimke resumes her story. Her discussion of the past is limited to her life experience; Grimke does not discuss the historical causes and effects of slavery, but shows its effect on her own life. Especially poignant and prophetic are her feelings of isolation, which Grimke and later feminists would later work to dispel by creating community. She says,

> Many times have I wept in the land of my birth over the system of slavery. I knew of none who sympathized in my feelings...no voice in the wilderness was heard calling on the people to repent and do works meet for repentance--and my heart sickened within me. Oh, how should I have rejoiced to know that such efforts as these were being made. I only wonder that I had such feelings. I wonder when I reflect under what influence I was brought up, that my heart is not harder than the nether millstone. But in the midst of temptation I was preserved, and my sympathy grew warmer, and my hatred of slavery more inveterate, until at last I have exiled myself from my native land because I could no longer endure to hear the wailing of the slave. I fled to the land of Penn; for here, thought I, sympathy for the slave will surely be found. But I found it not....I therefore shut up my grief in my own heart....Every Southern breeze wafted to me the discordant tones of weeping and wailing, shrieks and groans, mingled with prayers and blasphemous curses....I thought there was no hope....My heart sunk within me....But how different do I feel now! Animated with hope, nay, with an assurance of the triumph of liberty and

> good will to man, I will lift up my voice like a trumpet, and show this people...their sins of omission towards the slave, and what they can do towards affecting Southern mind, and overthrowing Southern oppression. (378-9)

The historical past belongs to (male) historians, and future to (male) leaders. Although women could be considered to have some insight into the moral sphere of life, their influence was not recognized to extend beyond the day-to-day realm. Women could speak authoritatively about neither the past nor the future, but only about the ongoing present, that is, about their own experience.

Perhaps because of her ties to the present (made more obvious by her immediate response to and utilization of the mob's disturbances), Grimke's speech proceeds in a nonlinear fashion. The discourse is not tightly argued but is unified thematically by the use of repetition. By circling back upon earlier images and ideas and amplifying them with traditional layers and echoes of meaning, Grimke achieves a rich, self-reflexive coherence. The speech is internally consistent (true to itself, like its speaker) and operates to form and draw upon associations in listeners' minds, rather than "proving" a "claim" as (male) debaters were wont to do.

REDEFINITION THROUGH TRANSFORMATION

The Biblical quotation, "God has chosen things that are not to bring to nought things that are," (379) could serve as Angelina Grimke's motto as she strives to redefine traditional concepts of "appropriateness" through reversal. This process of redefinition through reversal is known as transformation. Summarizing Burke, Olson notes that transformation is "the reversal of the material 'inside' the definitional boundaries with the material 'outside' those boundaries."[23] Grimke uses her claim to moral high ground as a means of redefining people and their behavior throughout the speech.

Her very first words, by the absence of parallel construction, create the possibility of future redefinition: "Men, brethren and fathers--mothers, daughters and sisters..." (375). While the terms

'brethren' and 'sisters,' and 'fathers' and 'mothers,' do parallel one another, they do not occur in parallel order and they have obvious status differences as well as their religious connotations. Notably, the men are additionally identified as 'men,' while the women are identified as 'daughters,' a clearly subordinate construction. The identities of the people in the audience reveal much about the social system, and, prophetically, leave open the possibility for redefinition.

By beginning with the word 'Men,' Grimke grants them linguistic and social priority, explicitly requesting the attention of the most powerful members of her audience. She then evokes common religious ground by addressing them as 'brethren,' and finally says 'fathers,' a term with connotations of authority in both religious and secular contexts. Although Grimke does grant the female members of the audience a degree of power by asking for their attention ('mothers, daughters and sisters'),[24] the women in her audience are not defined as women--yet. (Recall the renunciation of the title 'woman' in the Public Ledger and Daily Transcript, and recall also how hard 20th century feminists have worked to be called 'women' instead of 'girls,' which is patronizing, or 'ladies,' which is prim and powerless).

Grimke's female listeners are defined only in relational terms, as mothers or daughters or sisters. Although the men, in addition to being called 'men,' are also identified in relational terms (brethren and fathers), all of the terms Grimke uses to address her female listeners (mothers, daughters, sisters) are subservient to those terms she uses for men. (She never addresses the men as 'sons,' for example, which could imply motherly authority over men.)

But the process of empowerment is a gradual one. The fact that the relational terms are not exclusively defined in relationship to either men or women gives some hope because it provides room for redefinition. In other words, people can be mothers, daughters, sisters, brothers or fathers of either men or women. The men are never defined exclusively by their relationship to women (specifically, the men are never addressed as 'husbands'), but it is possible that the women are defined only by the men in their families. Women are defined but never necessarily defining. (Women are not addressed as 'wives,' however, which would explicitly lock them into definition by

men.) By preserving such ambiguity, Grimke's address leaves open the possibility that women can come to help define each other (as mothers, daughters and sisters),[25] as she will do when she directs a portion of her speech to the "Women of Philadelphia." However, Grimke must first enact the persona of a woman speaking for her rights and the rights of other oppressed people, before she can encourage other women to define themselves, to exercise their rights, and to choose the role of citizen rather than non-person.[26]

As Grimke continues the process of definitional transformation, sociability and hospitality (normally considered wholesome virtues) become linked to the slave system through which luxury at the slaveowner's table is made possible by exploitation in the fields. This is exemplified iconically as Grimke says, "Every Southern breeze wafted to me the discordant tones of weeping and wailing, shrieks and groans, mingled with prayers and blasphemous curses" (378). The structure of the sentence illustrates the (by now, stereotypically Southern) operating principle of the "iron hand in the velvet glove." The veneer of hospitality covers brutality: "Every Southern breeze wafted to me" is a gentle and pleasing formulation, but is immediately offset by "the discordant tones of weeping and wailing, shrieks and groans, mingled with prayers and blasphemous curses." Such a juxtaposition is in itself discordant, demonstrating the principle of iconicity at work. The gentleness of the sentence's beginning is far outweighed, in force and in length, by the multiple descriptions of the horrors of slavery that follow. The idea of surface pleasantry covering oppression is exactly what women have fought against, as well, as exemplified in the "pedestal and gutter" opposition of the Public Ledger's statements: "A woman is nothing. A wife is everything. A pretty girl is equal to 10,000 men...," in which a woman's function is to present an attractive surface at the expense of personal substance.

Grimke places the onus of responsibility directly on the men in power who could help, but refuse to act because they benefit from the system: "Men who hold the rod over slaves, rule in the councils of the nation" (380-1). Like the Pharisees, these men see the prophetic signs of which Grimke speaks, but do not believe. Their refusal to recognize and discuss the evils of slavery for

fear of public censure ultimately grants Grimke the right to speak: when men refuse to act according to God's will, she implies, God will find others to do the work. The men in power are "worldly-wise, and therefore, God, in his wisdom, employs them not" (376). Grimke, and others like her, although "foolish" and "weak" in the worldly definitions, are strong and wise because they have been chosen to do God's will and overcome the wise and the mighty.

Grimke's apparent weakness but actual strength echoes her earlier characterization of herself as "a reed shaken with the wind" (375). She is weak and of little "supposed influence" (375), but a reed vibrating in the wind creates a sound. The reed is a messenger, making the voice of God heard on earth. Wind/God is powerful and not susceptible to control by men. Grimke, the reed, does not tremble from fear; she is shaken with, not by, the voice of God. She is allied with God's purpose, and her message obeys a higher moral law. Although not powerful in the ordinary, worldly sense, she is a conduit for greater powers: morality and truth.

While Grimke is reassured by her adherence to a greater truth, the mob, on the other hand, should be afraid. The frequent interruptions of the mob are proof, she says, that the "Bastille of slavery" has been caused to "totter to its foundation." It is no accident that Grimke uses the image of the Bastille, which was created by men to imprison others. Her use of the Bastille metaphor is a warning that morally "unsound" "structures" or systems are likely to experience the same fate as did the oppressors in the French Revolution. The fact that "the South" (personified by anti-abolitionists) demands silence from her but is unable to enforce that demand (even by threats of physical violence) proves the justice of her cause and the power of her speaking. She gains this power in the course of the speech, by the very fact that she continues to speak. She urges her listeners to do likewise: "Every man and every woman present may do something by showing that we fear not a mob, and, in the midst of threatenings and revilings, by opening our mouths for the dumb and pleading the cause of those who are ready to perish" (380). Throughout the speech, but here especially, Grimke is enacting what she is recommending, providing a living, here-and-now example of the feasibility of obtaining rights by exercising them. Men, says Grimke, may deny women's right

to petition, but women have that and other rights "from our God...Only let us exercise them" (381). She empowers both herself and her listeners, most remarkably, her women listeners ("every man and every woman").

RHETORICAL EMPOWERMENT OF THE AUDIENCE: ICONICITY AT WORK

Late in the text, the empowerment of her women listeners is most apparent, as Grimke turns to address them directly. In so doing, she treats them as a rhetorical audience, capable of effecting change; a potentiality that Campbell notes often remains difficult even for contemporary women to see in themselves.[27] In this section of her speech, Grimke's use of iconicity is particularly potent, as sentence structure imitates and reinforces meaning, encouraging her listeners to redefine themselves and their rights.

> Women of Philadelphia! allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment to the land of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work. Especially let me urge you to petition. Men may settle this and other questions at the ballot-box, but you have no such right; it is only through petitions that you can reach the Legislature. It is therefore particularly your duty to petition. Do you say, "It does not good?" The South already turns pale at the number sent. They have read the reports of the proceedings of Congress, and there have seen that among other petitions were very many from the women of the North on the subject of slavery. This fact has called the attention of the South to the subject. How could we expect to have done more as yet? Men who hold the rod over slaves, rule in the councils of the nation: and they deny our right to petition and to remonstrate against abuses of our sex and of our kind. We have these rights, however, from our God. Only let us exercise them: and although often turned away unanswered, let us remember the influence of importunity upon the unjust judge, and act accordingly. The fact that the South look

> with jealousy upon our measures shows that they are effectual. There is, therefore, no cause for doubting or despair, but rather for rejoicing. (380-1)

Grimke turns specifically to her female listeners with, "Women of Philadelphia! allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment to the land of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work" (380). By addressing them as "Women of Philadelphia!" Grimke dignifies and redefines the women present, apart from their relationship to men ("mothers, daughters, sisters"). "Women of Philadelphia!" parallels "Men of Athens!" in its structure and its historicizing quality--it ties the people to the place and grants them citizenship, with its attendant rights and duties.

"[A]llow me" is both polite and direct; her object is not to offend these women but to enlist their help. "[A]s a Southern woman" defines Grimke by her place of origin and her personal experiences, differentiates her from her Northern listeners, and legitimizes her right to speak on conditions in the South. "[W]ith much attachment to the land of my birth" assures her audience that she speaks as she does out of a desire to better the South, not destroy it. Also, Grimke is not seeking to lead or represent the women of Philadelphia. She is not one of them and does not claim to be, but she can teach them something if they "allow" her. As in the consciousness raising efforts of women over a century later, Grimke is seeking to define her own identity and encourages her listeners to find their own autonomy and identity.

Grimke (politely but firmly) "entreats" the women of Philadelphia "to come up to this work"--in several ways. She, who has come "up" geographically from the South, asks them to come "up" morally to join her on the high ground, and to come "up" in potential, from their subordinate position to an effective and potent one. Note that the sentence begins with "Women" and ends with "work"--although destined for one another, they are initially separated by several clauses.

The process of empowerment proceeds gradually. Whereas in the "Women of Philadelphia..." sentence, the women were linguistically as well as physically separated from their work, in her next sentence, Grimke succeeds in iconically bringing the women closer to that destined work: "Especially let me urge <u>you</u> to <u>petition</u>" (my emphasis, here and following). The

women ("you") are separated from their duty ("petition") by a single small word, the preposition "to," whose linguistic function suggests relationship and movement. Grimke reminds her female listeners that God calls women to their work, by which they, although "small," can do immeasurable good.

Grimke distinguishes the right to petition from other rights that women cannot yet claim: "Men may settle this and other questions at the ballot-box, but you have no such right; it is only through petitions that you can reach the legislature." Women ("you") are linguistically--and literally--surrounded by the power of men, who have rights that women do not. On one side, women ("you") are close to the "ballot-box," the seat of power, yet separated by the word "but." On the other, they are close to that "right" but separated by the negation "no such."

Having created this tension (providing one right and then denying another right), Grimke resolves the dilemma by reinforcing the idea that the right to petition is the best (as well as the only) avenue to women's power. Through it, they "can reach the Legislature." She has linked women to their work and with the words, "can reach," establishes their ability to do that work. She continues: "It is therefore peculiarly your duty to petition." Petition has now become not simply a right, but a duty, reinforcing the idea of women as responsible citizens. Why is it women's duty? Because they (the weak and foolish) have been chosen by God to do His work.[28] Japp cites a letter in which Grimke assures her future husband that she and her sister "never mention women's rights in our lectures except so far as it is necessary to urge them to meet their responsibilities. We speak of their responsibilities and leave them to infer their rights."[29] By providing such a powerful example through her words and through the very act of speaking, Angelina Grimke implicitly encourages her female listeners to act as if they already have the rights they seek.

Anticipating the claim that women are powerless to change the status quo, Grimke asks and answers a likely question. "Do you say, 'It does no good?' The South already turns pale at the number [of petitions] sent" (380). As it is for the act of her speaking, the proof of the effectiveness of the petitions lies in the reaction of the South. She goes on to justify the apparent modesty of that achievement ("merely" calling the South's attention to Northern disapproval) by showing that the

men in power benefit from the system of slavery and therefore are not about to strike it down on their own. But these men are not all-powerful, just as the women are not totally without power. Although the men may "deny our right to petition and to remonstrate against abuses of our sex and of our kind" (381), they cannot entirely prevent women from claiming their rights. "We have these rights, however, from our God. Only let us exercise them" (381).

The assertion "We have these rights" is straightforward and firm, reminiscent of "we hold these truths" in power and form (and in its granting of citizenship to persons who feel persecuted). Its strength is enhanced by the contrast with the qualifying term, "however," (the only multi-syllable word in the sentence) which acts to slow the pace of the sentence, focus attention on and accentuate the claim, and create suspense about the final clause of the sentence. "[H]owever" also assures Grimke's listeners that she is aware of the tension between having the rights and being denied the use of them. "[F]rom our God" finishes and justifies the claim in powerful monosyllables. Since God, not men, has given women these rights, men cannot take them away. "Only let us exercise them" is almost ironic in the sense that exercising rights forbidden to them by men involves risk, but literal in another sense: women have these rights, all they need to do is use them, as Grimke is doing by speaking. The final sentences of this section serve to steel women against the likelihood of setbacks: since they are dealing with an "unjust judge" here on earth, they must expect obstacles. But, Grimke reminds her listeners, "The fact that the South look with jealousy upon our measures shows that they are effectual. There is, therefore, no cause for doubting or despair, but rather for rejoicing" (381). As she has done with the concepts of power, strength, wisdom, and social appropriateness, Grimke redefines the present situation so that the activists' apparent shortcomings as makers of policy are more than compensated for by their moral superiority to the opposition.

CONCLUSION

The tension created by moral and linguistic opposition and the ultimate reversal of ordinary meaning, in the definition of concepts such as power-weakness and appropriate-inappropriate behavior, echo the Biblical "every valley shall be exalted and every hill made low."[30] Using the ideas and techniques available to her from her religious background and using her own experience as proof, Angelina Grimke works to redefine her listeners' views of the North's responsibilities towards the slave. By performing the role of prophet and facing a hostile audience with courage, she gives her listeners the opportunity and encouragement to transform their view of women, redefining women as powerful and responsible persons. She enacts this redefinition by asking for a hearing but by assuming power.

The paradox of the many redefinitions in Grimke's speech stands iconically for the paradox of a woman speaking forcefully in public--a member of an oppressed group speaking on behalf of yet another oppressed group--and yet retaining her female identity, redefining herself and providing an example of self-definition for the women in her audience. Angelina Grimke, apparently weak and of little influence, is more powerful than an angry mob, as evidenced by the fact that they feel threatened by her. What is normally considered appropriate socia behavior (hospitality, compromise) becomes evidence of moral decay, while socially inappropriate behavior (a woman speaking in public, refusing to compromise, defying the wishes of men) becomes appropriate because she is being true to a higher moral law, a claim often made by those protesting worldly injustice.[31]

Angelina Grimke's address to the crowd at Pennsylvania Hall prefigures Campbell's labelling of feminist rhetoric as an "oxymoron," for even today, a woman speaking in public is in many ways a contradiction of terms. But by transforming current definitions of woman's proper role through the related and mutually-reinforcing concepts of enactment and iconicity, Grimke provides a model of rhetorical empowerment for the oppressed, not only for her contemporaries but for her rhetorical heirs as well. Eventually, through continued efforts, the oxymoron of a "women (or 'minority' member) enacting power in public" should cease to be a contradiction in terms and become--merely--redundant.

NOTES

1. Excerpt from the Public Ledger and Daily Transcript, reprinted in History of Woman Suffrage, Volume I: 1848-1861, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., (New York: Fowler-Wells, Publishers, 1881), Appendix, 804.

2. Samuel J. May, recalling his reaction on first hearing the Grimke sisters speak in public, in "Woman Question–Misses Grimke," Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict (Boston: Fields, Osgood, and Co., 1869), 233-236.

3. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," Quarterly Journal of Speech 59 (1973): 78.

4. Campbell, 79.

5. For biographical material, see Gerda Lerner, The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina: Rebels Against Slavery (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1967); or Katharine Lumpkin, The Emancipation of Angelina Grimke (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974).

6. Samuel Webb, who recorded the events at Pennsylvania Hall as they happened, notes, "It will be seen by the report of her remarks given below, that she was frequently interrupted by the mob. This circumstance made it next to impossible to give a full report of her remarks, or one that will do justice to her talents" (123). Grimke's speech was said to have lasted approximately one hour. The text as reported by Webb is obviously incomplete, since it is only a few pages long, but it is coherent and rewards a close reading. Samuel Webb, History of Pennsylvania Hall, which was destroyed by a mob, on the 17th of May 1838 ([Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838], Louisville: Lost Cause Press, 1971), 123-126. Portions of Grimke's Pennsylvania Hall address have been reprinted in Stanton et al., 334-336, and the "entire" address appears in Lerner, 375-381.

7. Even fellow abolitionists, who believed in the cause for which she spoke, were often at best unnerved or concerned at the prospect of Angelina Grimke speaking in public. At worst, of course, they were hostile and factionary. The quote from Samuel May at the beginning of the paper reveals the process by which many who had reservations were "converted." However, much opposition remained.

8. The mob outside Pennsylvania Hall was a very real threat: in addition to generating noise and commotion, members of the crowd threw stones at the windows while Grimke was speaking and returned the next day to burn down the hall. It is a measure of the public turmoil that the mayor of Philadelphia told the mob, "We don't call out the militia here. You are my police," and that the only group of firemen who turned their hoses on the burning building found themselves the target of their fellow firemen's hoses! (See Lumpkin, 153-4.)

9. Phyllis M. Japp, "Esther or Isaiah?: The Abolitionist-Feminist Rhetoric of Angelina Grimke," Quarterly Journal of Speech 71 (1985): 341-6.

10. Campbell, 77-8. The harshness of this judgment (that a woman speaking is, by definition, radical) can be softened somewhat if the woman assumes a pleading stance, requesting mercy or kindness from male figures of authority. Japp notes that while Grimke had adopted such a posture in the past, she abandons it in the Pennsylvania Hall address (see Japp, 337-344). Neither do contemporary proponents of women's liberation rely heavily on such a strategy. When feminists have used such tactics in the past, they have regretted it, as evinced by Eleanor Smeal's post-ERA commentary: "Well, we know better now. We are never again going to beg men for our rights." Eleanor Smeal, "The ERA Countdown Ends," National NOW Times (August, 1982): 2-3, quoted in Japp, 345.

11. In her article on Grimke's use of different rhetorical personae, Japp notes that Angelina Grimke's husband, abolitionist Theodore Weld, urged Grimke to devote her time to abolition rather than to the "woman question": "The most effective statement for women's rights, he argued, was for women to act as if they already had those rights," 338.

12. Japp discusses persona as a form of self-persuasion as well as public persuasion, 344.

13. Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1981), 233-243.

14. Quoted in Stanton et al., 804.

15. See Japp for a discussion of Grimke's use of the Biblical personae of Esther and Isaiah, 335-348.

16. Ellen Reid Gold notes that the writings of the Grimke sisters reflect their increasing ego strength, demonstrating the "ego-function of the rhetoric of protest" described by Gregg. While helpful, Gold does not mention the Pennsylvania Hall address in her analysis, and Gregg deals mainly with protestors who reject, rather than seek to reach, their opponents. Although Grimke had little hope of "converting" hard-core anti-abolitionists to her cause, the testimony of persons such as Samuel May (see headnote) illustrates that her speaking abilities served more than a consummatory function, allowing her to influence many who were previously opposed to the idea of a woman speaking in public. Ellen Reid Gold, "The Grimke Sisters and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement," Southern Speech Communication Journal 46.4 (1981): 341-360. Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," Philosophy and Rhetoric 3 (Spring, 1971): 71-91.

17. Japp, 342.

18. Angelina Grimke, "Speech in Pennsylvania Hall," in Lerner, 375. I have chosen to quote from the speech as reprinted in Lerner because the Lerner book is relatively accessible: it contains larger print and, in my experience, is available in more libraries than reprints of the Webb, which may be on microfilm if available at all. Subsequent citations to the speech will appear in parenthesis in the text.

19. Roderick P. Hart and Don M. Burks, "Rhetorical Sensitivity and Social Interaction," Communication Monographs 39.2 (June 1972): 75-91.

20. Japp, 342.

21. Lux has noted that Grimke treats the disturbances of the crowd as protests against abolition, rather than protests against a woman speaking. Thomas Lux, unpublished paper, University of Wisconsin, Madison, December 1988.

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22. Edmund Burke, "Speech at the Guildhall in Bristol, Previous to the Late Election in that City, Upon Certain Points Relative to His Parliamentary Conduct," September 6, 1780, The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Volume II of XII, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1901), 382.

23. Kathryn M. Olson, "The Controversy over President Reagan's Visit to Bitburg: Strategies of Definition and Redefinition," Quarterly Journal of Speech 75 (1989): 132. Olson identifies two primary types of redefinition; the other is transcendence, which subsumes, rather than reversing, the figure and ground; it "merges what is inside and outside the boundaries," 133. Olson's summaries are derived from Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945), xix, 24; and Kenneth Burke, Attitudes Toward History, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 336, 224.

24. She is, after all, addressing the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women!

25. Campbell mentions the notion of establishing "sisterhood" as being especially important in feminist rhetoric, 79.

26. Japp hints at, but does not develop this notion when she says, "Only when [Grimke] had established herself in the prophetic persona did she turn to the woman question," 343.

27. Campbell, 78.

28. The notion of being chosen recurs significantly in this speech. The Hebrews were God's chosen people ("peculiar people," quotes Grimke mid-way through the speech) and here, that sense of being singled out for great purpose is echoed as Grimke tells women that it is "peculiarly" their duty to petition.

29. Gilbert Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., Letters of Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld and Sarah Grimke: 1822-1844 (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934), 432. Cited in Japp, 339.

30. We are reminded as well of Shakespeare's accomplishments in Julius Caesar, as Anthony is ultimately able to condemn Brutus by saying that he is "an honorable man."

31. Early martyrs, persecuted for their beliefs, share this strategy with more recent proponents of "civil disobedience," for example. Martin Luther King used this technique in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." See Richard P. Fulkerson, "The Public Letter as a Rhetorical Form: Structure, Logic, and Style in King's 'Letter from Birmingham Jail'," Quarterly Journal of Speech 65 (1979): 121-136.

Suzanne Daughton

Excerpts from Angelina Grimke's Pennsylvania Hall Address

(May 16, 1838)

Grimke begins:

Men, brethren and fathers--mothers, daughters and sisters, what came ye out for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Much later in the speech, she addresses her female listeners:

Women of Philadelphia! allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment to the land of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work. Especially let me urge you to petition. Men may settle this and other questions at the ballot-box, but you have no such right; it is only through petitions that you can reach the Legislature. It is therefore peculiarly your duty to petition....